REMARKS

ON THE LATE

HON. SÀDAGOPAH CHARLOO'S INTRODUCTION

TO A

REPRINT OF A PAMPHLET

ENTITLED,

"THEOSOPHY OF THE HINDOOS."

BY

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TINNEVELLY.

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REMARKS.

A few days ago the writer was favoured by a friend with a copy of a Madras reprint of a pamphlet entitled, "Theosophy of the Hindus, being a review of the doctrines of the Bhagavat Gita by an Englishman, with an Introduction by the Honorable Sadagopah Charloo."

The Introduction derives a melancholy interest from the premature death of the author a few days after its publication, and the melancholy interest attached to it is increased by the insight which it affords into the religious opinions and position of one of the most eminent of the now numerous class of Hindús who have received a liberal English education in this Presidency.

A lover of truth, and one who anticipates valuable results from the spread of English education, cannot but feel disappointed when he finds that the religious views of the able and respected author of the Introduction had scarcely in any particular risen above those of the unanglicised, and it may be added, the uneducated, mass of his fellow countrymen, and that the principal difference between the line he has taken in this public manifesto of his opinions and the line which is commonly taken by the uneducated, consists in the skilful adaptation of his remarks to the special purpose of recalling Hindú students of the English language and literature to faith in their hereditary Hinduism.

The form which the Introduction takes is that of an endeavour to aid the enquiring Hindú in his search after truth by furnishing him with a series of hints

towards the formation of right opinions; and I may be permitted to follow up this endeavour by examining whether the principles taught or implied in most of those hints are sound, and whether the inquirer after truth can safely entrust himself to the author's guidance.

I. Even with respect to matters of trivial importance, the author of the Introduction claims for Hindú ideas a substantial accordance with truth which does not exist. "The anglicised youth," he says, "is taught in School to wonder at the absurd sub-division of matter into the five elements by the Hindú philosophers. On inquiry this wonder disappears. He soon finds that the Sanskrit word Pancha-bhútam does not mean an element in the chemical sense of a simple substance. The term represents a five-fold state of matter, viz., solidity, liquidity, gaseousness, imponderability, and extension. There is therefore nothing absurd in this rough sub-division of matter, more especially when it is seen that the division had reference to moral considerations such as the influence of the material world on the actions and destinies of the soul."

Now in reality there is not the slightest foundation for this statement. In the text books of Hindú philosophy in which the *Padârthas* or categories are treated of, the five elements are placed, not in the category of "quality," as fluidity is, but in that of "substance;" and in stating the qualities which are supposed to reside in each of the five elementary substances, solidity is not mentioned as a quality of earth at all. On the contrary its distinguishing quality is represented to be odour! ("Earth is that in which there is the quality of odour.") So also the distinguishing quality of water is not liquidity, but taste. The distinguishing quality of light or heat is not gaseousness, but warmth. The distinguishing quality of air is not im-

ponderability, but tangibility, and the distinguishing quality of ether is not extension, but sound. Moreover, this classification of the elements does not refer to any moral considerations whatever, except the mode in which the world originated can be called a moral consideration, but is intended to explain the creation of the world by development, the elements being developed out of the senses, and the world being developed out of the elements. The elements are represented as five, simply because the senses are five.

The error of the existence of only five elementary substances is one which pervaded all the philosophies of antiquity, not Hindú philosophy alone, and it would be better to acknowledge it to be an error than to represent it, by an arbitrary use of words, as an anticipation of European science.

II. In page II the author represents the youthful Hindú inquirer as "turning his attention to the fountain head of all Hindú religions and religious teachings —the sacred Vedas. With the help of the able gloss of Sáyanácharya, commonly called Vidyáranya Bháshya, he unravels their mystic contents; and is agreeably surprised to find a really pure and elevated monotheism developed from and out of an apparently discordant system of polytheism and even of pantheism."

This statement also is marked rather by a skilful use of European phraseology than by an ingenuous allegiance to truth. Not to speak of the improbability of five complete copies of Sáyana's immense work, except as published by Professor Max Müller and translated by Professor Wilson, being found in all Southern India, would it not have been more reasonable to represent the Hindú inquirer as surprised to find in the hymns of the Veda on which Sáyana has commented no trace of any of the religions or religious teachings of which he had been taught to regard it as the fountain-head—

no trace of Siva or Párvati, of Ganésa or Subrahmanya—no trace of Vishnu, except as a name of the sun and as a divinity far inferior to Indra—no trace of idol-worship, or of the use of sectarial marks, or of penances and pilgrimages? Hinduism indeed, as it exists at present, is a religion of comparatively modern origin, and can no more be said to be founded upon the Vedas than the image-worship of the Roman Catholics can be said to be founded upon the Bible, or the idolatrous ceremonies of the Indian Muhammedans founded upon the Koran. The pure and elevated monotheism which the enquiring Hindu is supposed to find developed in the Vedas is little better than a flight of the imagination. The worship taught in almost every hymn of the Vedas is that of the sky, fire, the sun, the dawn, the winds, and other elemental divinities, with mythological additions more or less intelligible.

It is true that in a few of the hymns of the last book of the Rig Veda a more elevated system begins to make its appearance. One hymn (the celebrated Purusha súkta) teaches a doctrine concerning the Supreme Spirit which is evidently identical with the pantheism taught in most of the Upanishadas, and another hymn is distinctively monotheistic; but the religious system of the Vedas, in so far as it can be regarded as a system, remains demonstrably that of the worship of the elements. Isolated exceptions, to the extent of one hymn in several hundreds, leave this fact unshaken. It might be an agreeable surprise to the Hindú, and certainly would be to the European scholar, to find a pure and elevated monotheism scientifically developed, whether by Sáyana or by any other commentator, out of the elemental polytheism of the Vedas; but if Sáyana has educed any such doctrine out of the Vedas, considered as a whole, it is only because he has systematically interpreted

the ancient Vaidik hymns in the sense of the Vedantic philosophy of his own times. The interpretation is a proof of his ingenuity, not of his ingenuousness. He puts his own meaning on everything, and then naturally enough finds his own meaning everywhere.

I may mention as an illustration of this the celebrated Gáyatri. Sáyana renders this accurately enough into ordinary Sanskrit,—"We meditate on that desirable light of the radiant sun, which animates all our acts," and then instead of interpreting it, in accordance with its natural and obvious meaning, as simply an invocation of the sun to render religious performances successful,—a meaning which would accord with the similar invocations of the sun and the waters contained in the Sandhyá, or daily prayers of the Brahmans,—he proceeds to comment mystically upon it, representing the sun as meaning Brahma, the soul of the world, and its light as the light of Brahma, one with himself, which consumes ignorance. Sáyana's interpretation however, imaginative as it is, is far surpassed in imaginative fervor by the translation of this very text put forth by Sir W. Jones, a translation with which no doubt he was furnished by his pundit. He rendered it thus :"—Let us adore the supremacy of that divine sun, the godhead, who illuminates all, who recreates all, from whom all proceed, to whom all must return, whom we invoke to direct our understandings aright in our progress towards his holy seat." On this principle of translation it would not be difficult to develop anything out of anything.

III. I readily admit that the doctrine held by the author of the Introduction, in common with most of the Vaishnavas of Southern India,—whether it be the doctrine of the Dwaita or that of the Visishtádwaita Schools—with respect to the Universe, to Soul, and to the relation in which both stand to God, is more in accordance with Christian philosophy than the Adwaita doctrine of the Smártas. I pass over for the present

the denial by the Vaishnavas, as by all Hindus, of creation properly so called, and accept as an instalment of the truth, their doctrine of the existence of a Supreme Deity "possessed of attributes," and who may therefore be regarded as a personal God.

I ask, however, is the inquirer after truth to rest satisfied with high-sounding words concerning the existence of God, without rendering him the homage of corresponding deeds? No temple is erected by any Hindú sect in Southern India to the honour of that one Supreme Being, whom they all profess to acknowledge, nor are there any rites prescribed for his worship. No assembly of Hindús, with the solitary exception of the "Brahma Samája" in Calcutta, is ever convened for offering him prayer or praise. No means are in operation for teaching people to know him, or expounding to them how they may serve him, and how his favour may be obtained. Worship is offered to every conceivable and inconceivable form of being, but no worship is offered to him who is admitted to be the only Source of Being. Like the nature of European writers, for all practical purposes, he is non-existent. Might not the Hindú inquirer have been reminded that in this respect at least it must be allowed that there is an important difference between the religions of India and Christianity, seeing that whilst Hindús of every School regard God as merely "a subject of speculation," just in the same way as causalty, matter, and the existence of ether are subjects of speculation amongst European philosophers, He is regarded by Christians as "the object of faith," the sole object of worship, as an ever-present Father and King, whose favour is life and whose service is perfect freedom.

IV. The author of the Introduction appears to oscillate between the denial of all incarnations of God, whether Christian or Hindú, and the theory that "both

the Christian and the Hindú incarnations were true and intended for different nations and differing ages." It is evident however that his predilections are in favour of the latter view, and that he regards "the seeming improbabilities and inconsistencies of both as being the productions of imaginative minds in credulous ages. He observes that "the question for decision is the weight to be attached to the evidence in support of each of the incarnations set up on each side," and adds that "in respect of this, Christians are in possession of historical evidence of more modern-date than the Hindús."

The author does not inform his readers, and I may therefore be allowed to remind them in his room, that the difference between the incarnations believed in by Hindús and the incarnation of Christ is far too great and essential to be capable of being attributed to any difference of nation or age, and that with respect to evidence, the question for decision is not between different degrees of evidence, but between evidence on the one side which is admitted by all to be weighty and the entire absence of evidence on the other.

Our moral consciousness being the divinest part of our nature, and that which speaks to us most directly of God, an incarnation of God must bear witness of itself to our moral consciousness as an incarnation not only of God's power, but still more of His character. It must be an incarnation of purity, truth, and grace; and as duty and man's moral nature by which duty is discerned are everywhere the same, these characteristics of a true incarnation cannot be affected by any difference in race or age. The purpose which is to be accomplished by the incarnation must also be a purpose worthy of God.

Will any of the Hindú incarnations abide this test?

I need not refer to any of the earlier incarnations of Vishnu, as a fish, a boar, &c., as it will be admitted

that those fabulous appearances were not incarnations properly so called, but mere apparitions.

The first incarnation which professes to have been real was that of Parasu Ráma, so called from the *parasu*, or battle-axe, which he wielded as his weapon of war. Though regarded as an incarnation, nothing superhuman has ever been pointed out in his character or acts, except the superhuman ruthlessness with which he destroyed the Kshatriyas, or warrior race of India, in the interest of the Brahmans. Moreover as he was a votary of Siva, though an incarnation of Vishnu, and is represented in the Rámáyana. as having had a duel with the second and greater Ráma, in which he was deservedly worsted, few Vaishnavas in these days will care to stand up for his divinity.

The next incarnation was that of Ráma-chandra, the second Rámá, the hero of the Rámáyana. Admitting Ráma, if he ever really lived, to have been a brave, generous, faithful hero, an excellent specimen of the chivalrous age of India, the claim set up for his having been an incarnation of Vishnu rests exclusively on the evidence of his impossible achievements in the slaughter of impossible giants and monkeys.

His divinity is not, and cannot be, argued for from moral considerations, for whatever his virtues may have been, they were equalled and surpassed by those of persons for whose divinity no claim is set up—equalled by his brothers Bharata and Lakshmana, and far surpassed by his wife Sítá, the finest creation of the Hindú poetic mind. Strangely enough the chief blemish apparent in Ráma's character consisted in the coldness and suspicion with which the Rámáyana represents him as receiving back his long lost, recovered Sítá, and which are developed into still darker proportions in the Uttara Khánda, or supplementary section, of the Rámáyana and in the drama entitled the Uttara Ráma Charitra. Ráma's character throughout is that

of a human hero, characterised by human limitations and requiring help in the accomplishment of his purposes, not that of a god ; and the portions of the Rámáyana which represent him as an incarnation of Vishnu have all the appearance of being later additions to the poem.

The third incarnation properly so called was that of Bala-Ráma, half-brother of Krishna, a strong-handed, empty-headed hero, who in all his battles used a plough as his weapon of war, and who is remarkable chiefly for having been the first to discover the use of toddy, to which he addicted himself ever after with great perseverance. The only conceivable reason for regarding him as a divine incarnation is the supposition (which is not however a Hindú one) that he may have typified the discovery of the use of the plough and the cultivation of the palm.

The most popular of all the Indian incarnations is that of Krishna, whose mark is worn on the forehead of perhaps three-fifths of the Natives of India, taking India as a whole, and one of whose names was worn by the author of the Introduction. It is a melancholy fact however that the moral evidence against the admission of Krishna's divinity, notwithstanding his popularity, is not merely of a negative character, like that which applies to Ráma, but is of the most positive and conclusive kind.

If our moral intuitions, our moral judgments, our conscience, and our sense of decency and propriety, are allowed to decide the question, Krishna certainly was not an incarnation of God. In the Mahá-bhárata, in which he first comes upon the stage, the only thing in which he is represented as differing from ordinary heroes is in the possession of supernatural strength. In every moral quality he is much inferior to Arjuna, the real hero of the poem, and inferior even to Yudhishtara and Karna. The legends which are current

respecting his youthful frolics and licentious excesses belong to a later period. They are collected and related in an attractive style in the Bhágavata Purána, which for this reason is the most popular Purána in India, and the celebrated Tenth Book of which may be called the Gospel according to the Vaishnavas.

I need not adduce any Christian arguments, or arguments derived from ethics, to disprove the divinity of such a character as that which is attributed to Krishna. It will be sufficient for this purpose to quote a saying attributed to Krishna himself in the Bhagavad Gítá, a much purer composition than the Bhágavata,—"As often as there is a decline of virtue or an increase of vice in the world, I create myself anew; and thus I appear from age to age for the preservation of the just, the destruction of the wicked and the establishment of virtue."

According to the teaching of this passage, Krishna's claim to be a divine incarnation falls self-refuted to the ground, for the signs of a true incarnation, as stated in this passage, are diametrically opposed to the whole tone and tenor of his life. The Krishna of the Bhágavad Gítá was bound to appear for the destruction of such characters as the Krishna of the Bhágavata.

Hindús frequently argue, and the Bhágavata Purána argues, that the impurities of Krishna's life are not to be imitated by his followers, inasmuch as they were the actions of a god and were merely a "divine amusement." This argument is refuted by anticipation in another passage of the Gítá. Krishna is represented as saying, "whatever the prince practises that the rest of the people practise: whatever example he sets they follow. If I were not to continue acting (that is performing religious and moral duties), men in all respects would follow my steps. These men would be ruined, if I were not to act; and I should become the author of a confusion (of castes), I should

destroy these creatures." Krishna's claims to immunity from moral obligations are here refuted by Krishna himself. The theosophical Krishna refutes the mythological Krishna. The state of things deprecated by the Gítá in the passage last quoted is the very state of things that has been brought about. The people follow Krishna's steps and are ruined; for the stories related of Krishna's life do more than any thing else to destroy the morals and corrupt the imaginations of the Hindú youth.

I need not set myself, on the other hand, to prove the conformity of Christ's character, as recorded in the Gospels, to every thing that our moral consciousness tells us respecting the character of God. It would be unnecessary for me to undertake such a task; for happily the educated youth of Madras have ready access to the Bible, and may acquire, and probably already possess, a better acquaintance with its contents than with the contents of the Vedas, Itihásas and Puránas.

I would only ask them to ascertain for themselves by an examination of the Gospels; (1) whether it is not a fact that the character of Christ as represented in the Gospels, not in vague poetical imagery, but in minute historical detail, is distinguished beyond that of any person recorded in history for purity, goodness, and grace; (2) whether the purpose for which Christ became a man and died, viz., to furnish men with a pattern of moral excellence and to reconcile sinful men to the holy and blessed God, was not a purpose worthy of a divine incarnation; (3) whether the life, doctrines and death of Christ, or the influence of His life, doctrines and death upon Christians, has not, as a matter of historical fact, been the origin of all that is most elevated in the moral and spiritual life of Christendom, and of all that has rendered Christendom the source of moral and spiritual life to the rest of the world; and (4) whether it would not be unrea-

sonable to ascribe results so divine to any thing less than a divine cause.

Let educated, inquiring Hindús examine the Christian Scriptures for themselves "to see whether these things are so" (Acts of the Apostles, xvii. 11), and they will necessarily I believe cease to draw any sort of comparison between things so essentially different as the incarnation of Krishna and the incarnation of Christ.

With respect also to the historical evidence of these events, the difference between the one narrative and the other is equally essential. Though historical evidence is not intuitively apparent, as moral evidence is, to every mind, yet every one who has read history and knows any thing of the nature of historical proof is aware of the fact that the Gospels, in which the life and death of Christ are recorded, can be proved to have been written by the persons whose names they bear—persons who either (as St. Matthew and St. John) were eye-witnesses of the facts they relate, or who (as St. Mark and St. Luke) received their information from persons who were eye-witnesses. Evidence of this kind is all that would be required in a Court of Law for establishing the reality of alleged facts or the authenticity of documents; but what Court of Law would listen for a moment to the evidence (it is a libel on history to call it by the name of evidence) which is alleged in behalf of the incarnations of Vishnu?

How does the case stand?

Was the author of the Rámáyana an eye-witness of any of the events he relates, or does he even pretend to have received his information from eye-witnesses? Nothing of the kind. The work is anonymous, and the author no where makes any allusion to himself or to the relation in which he stood to his hero. It is commonly supposed indeed that the Rámáyana was written by Válmíki, *before* the events related in it occur-

red; but on what authority? The authority alleged is that of Kusa and Lava, the sons of Ráma, who first recited the poem in public at a great horse-sacrifice, and who professed to have been taught it by Válmíki. Who Kusa and Lava really were will appear as soon as their names are combined. Their compound name is in Sanskrit *Kusilavau*, and the singular of this name is *Kusilava*, which means simply "a bard," "a herald," in later times "an actor." All therefore that can really be said is that the Rámáyana was composed by some bard or bards of whom nothing now is known. Válmíki was in reality a rishi of the Vaidik period, and is represented as one of the early collectors of the Vedas. Probably his name was given to the poem, just as the Mahá-bhárata was ascribed to Vyása, the last and most celebrated collector of the Vedas, simply for the purpose of gaining for it the reputation of great antiquity. If he ever really lived he cannot have been later than 800 years before Christ, whereas it is certain that the Rámáyana cannot have been composed before 400 B. C., inasmuch as Buddhism had already appeared and had begun to make progress, before its composition. In addition to this, it is to be remembered that the object the author of the Rámáyana had in view was plainly that of gratifying the imagination and pleasing the ear, not that of narrating facts which he wished posterity to believe. His poem is not a sober, truth-like narrative, like the Gospels, but a highly ornamented epic, a poetical romance, of which the utmost that can be said is that it is possibly founded on facts. For this reason the more critical Hindús term the Rámáyana not an *itihása*, "a history," or an *ákhyána*, "a narrative," but *kávya*, "a poem," "an epic."

The historical evidence of the narrative of the life of Krishna is even less tangible and less worthy of serious consideration.

The Mahá-bhárata is the earliest Indian poem in

which Krishna's life is narrated, and "the great war" of the descendants of Bharata, which forms the nucleus of the Mahá-bhárata, is said by the writer of the Review of Hindu Theosophy (to which the Introduction on which I have been remarking is prefixed) to have taken place about 5,000 years ago. All scholars have long been agreed that this date is an extravagant exaggeration, and that about B. C. 800 is more probably the date of the war. The most important enquiry however is, when does the Mahá-bhárata, in which Krishna's life and the events of the war between the Pándava and Kaurava cousins are recorded, appear to have been composed ?

It is said to have been composed by Krishna-Dwaipáyana ("Island-born Krishna"), surnamed Vyása or Veda-Vyása, "the collector of the Vedas, the rishi to whom the final collection of the Vedas is attributed. The collection of the Vedas, from which Krishna-Dwaipáyana takes his name, may also have taken place about B. C. 800, (see Müller's Sanskrit Literature), but the Mahá-bhárata could not have been composed till many hundreds of years later. Buddhism is spoken of in the Bhárata as a flourishing and powerful system, professed by many of the nations and kings of India; and this brings down the composition of the poem to about 300 years before Christ, or 500 years after "the great war." It speaks also of Yavanas, or Greeks, and Sakas, or Scythians, as bearing rule *in* India, and this brings the date of the poem, or at least the date of the collection of the legends of which it is composed, lower down still; for the Indo-Greek kingdom was established in Western India in 160 B. C., and the rule of the Indo-Scythians commenced in 120 B. C.

The date of the Mahá-bhárata has not yet however reached its lowest limit; for mention is made in it of the dynasty of the Andhra kings of Magadha, and that dynasty succeeded the Kanwas in B. C. 23, and continued to bear rule for 256 years.

Another circumstance bearing on the composition of the Mahá-bhárata requires to be noticed.

It is stated in the poem itself that on its first publication, when it was recited at Janamêjaya's snake-sacrifice by Vaisampáyana, as he had been taught it by Vyása, it contained only 24,000 verses. The Calcutta edition of the Mahá-bhárata contains 91,015 verses, not including the Hari-vamsa! At what period and by whom was this immense addition composed? We have a hint given us in the Mahá-bhárata itself as to the mode in which additions were made; for it is stated therein that the poem was next learned by Lómaharshana, ("Hair-standing-on-end"), a Súta or palace-bard, by whom it was taught to Ugrasrava ("Sharp-listener"), his son, who recited it in public the second time at the sacrifice of Saunaka, and that on the occasion of this second publication of the poem it was found to have grown to much larger proportions than it possessed at first. This is no doubt the due to the history of the composition of the poem. A succession of bards have made it what it is. Some portions of it may be as old as 400 B. C.; the larger portion is probably as old as 200 B. C.; the portions which represent Krishna as an incarnation are probably later than the Christian era; whilst the Bhagavad Gítá, which is proved by its style and by its eclectic philosophy to be the most modern portion, is placed by Professor Wilson as low as 800 years after Christ. Thomson, the most recent editor of the Gítá, thinks it may have been written before 300 A. D.

On what ground therefore can it be seriously argued that the narrative of Krishna's life contained in the Gítá is capable of being regarded as "historical evidence," or that the evidence of the truth of the life of Christ as contained in the Gospels which Christians adduce is merely "of more modern date" than th[illegible] which is possessed by Hindus?"

Krishna's life, moreover, is narrated in the [illegible]

há-bhárata in several different ways. In the briefest and therefore probably the earliest series of stories, he is represented simply as a hero; in the more extended and adorned narratives he is represented as a god, as an incarnation of Vishnu, but not as himself the Supreme; whilst in the episode of the Bhagavad-Gítá and other portions which belong evidently to a later period, he is represented as the only God, the soul of the world, the primeval spirit whose material form is the universe.

As every representation of Krishna as a divine incarnation is probably later than the Christian era, it has been conjectured by Professor Wilson, and argued for by the eminent German Orientalist Weber, that not only the doctrine of Krishna's incarnation and many particulars respecting his early history, but also and especially the doctrine of the all-sufficiency of faith in him, as taught in the Bhagavad Gítá, originated in the teaching of Christians, during the period of the intercourse of the Hindús with the Greeks. Lassen, one of the most learned and dispassionate of Sanskrit scholars, whilst disputing the accuracy of the theory as a whole, admits that it is implied in a remarkable story in the Mahá-bhárata, according to which the rishi Nárada, in teaching the efficacy of exclusive faith in Vásu-déva, or Krishna, states that he learned this doctrine during a visit he had made to Swéta-dwípa, "the White island," or island of the Whites, so called because its inhabitants were as "white as the Moon." Those people were distinguished, he says, for their faith in one invisible God, whom they worshipped without images, and had attained, even whilst in this life, to a state of heavenly blessedness through the efficacy of their exclusive faith in him.

It seems certain that a great gulph exists between the earliest representations of Krishna and those of later date, which can be filled up only by the supposition of an influence from some external source;

and it seems most in accordance with such statements as the above to suppose that that external source was Christianity.

V. In page VIII of his Introduction the author undertakes the defence of the worship of idols, and urges the Hindu youth to "divest himself of all school-learned prejudices against Idolatry in the Christian sense of the word, and try to understand the origin of this institution, its objects, and its effects on the mind of its votaries, and judge for himself whether there is really anything grovelling or absurd in the institution." This apology set up in behalf of Idolatry is the most melancholy portion of the Introduction, especially considering who the author was, and the expectations that might justly have been formed respecting his enlightenment. I should be ashamed to make any rejoinder to this apology in the English language.

With the uneducated Hindú, who knows no better, I should be perfectly ready to discuss such a subject in the vernacular. I think I may safely leave it to school-boys acquainted with English to vindicate the propriety of their "school-learned prejudices" against Idolatry. The only assistance I shall give them will be to direct their attention to a note of the author's, in which he admits the novelty of idol-worship to be, as it can easily be proved to be, an historical fact. He says, "This mode of worshipping God has been instituted in *later days* of *Hindú religious history*, i. e., during the Agama period, *when it was seen that the people were unable to worship God in spirit.*"

VI. The composition to which the Introduction is prefixed purports to be a "Review of the doctrines of the Bhagavad Gítá by an Englishman," including copious extracts from Wilkins's rhetorical and unreliable translation of that work. The author of the Introduction eulogizes the Review as an "able and dispassionate" production, whilst his estimate of the merits of the Gítá itself is peculiarly exalted.

"The Gítá," he says, "is to the Hindú what the four Gospels are to the Christian. It is the re-embodiment of the doctrines of the Vedas in a new dress"; and he concludes by expressing his conviction, that "if not of direct divine origin, as is believed by his countrymen, it must unquestionably have been inspired by THE MORAL GOVERNOR of the Universe, at a period of remote antiquity."

It is necessary, after such an eulogy as this, that the inquiring Hindú should be enabled to form a more correct estimate of the merits of the Gítá and of the value of the evidence on which it is asserted to have been inspired by the Moral Governor of the Universe; and it is all the more necessary to enquire carefully into this matter because of the deserved celebrity of the Gítá, considered as a poetical composition. The Gítá is undoubtedly a poem of great beauty and sweetness, as well as of great metaphysical acumen. Schlegel does not overstep the mark when he describes it as the finest philosophical poem in the world.

The author of the Gítá makes use of the machinery of the Mahá-bhârata for the purpose of expounding his metaphysical views, and has thus succeeded in getting his poem regarded as an episode of the Mahá-bhárata. The valiant, generous Arjuna and Krishna, his powerful friend, re-appear on the stage, but each is represented in a new character. Arjuna hesitates to do his part in battle through fear of slaying his kinsmen, and Krishna, who acts as Arjuna's charioteer (hence called Párthasárathi), forgetting the licentiousness of his past life, proceeds to deliver to Arjúna a series of lectures on philosophy and religion. "Bhagavad Gítá" means the song of Bhagavat, or the Lord, and Bhagavat is here to be understood as meaning Krishna. The Gítá is one of the most sacred textbooks of the Vaishnavas, but is not regarded by the Saivas as a book of authority.

Warren Hastings, in his Introduction to Sir Charles

Wilkins' translation of the Gítá, eulogizes the doctrine taught therein as "accurately corresponding with that of the Christian dispensation." I have already mentioned that the Gítá, far from being a production of "remote antiquity," is undoubtedly later than the Christian era. I am not disposed therefore to deny the existence of a Christian element in some portions of the Gítá, especially in its teaching respecting faith and works, and it is possible that it is that very element which attracts the attention of Hindús who are acquainted with English literature and commends itself to them as inspired.

The greater portion however of the Gítá is decidedly anti-Christian, and I think I shall be able to prove to the satisfaction of the discerning Hindú that its philosophy, taken as a whole, is unsound and incapable of being regarded as inspired by the Moral Governor of the Universe.

A convincing proof of this is furnished by the teaching contained in the Introductory Chapter.

Arjuna seeing before him the hosts of the Kauravas begins to lament the necessity of warring with his own relations. He says in substance, "Amongst them I see uncles, cousins, and preceptors. Why am I about to fight with the kindred of my own blood? were it not better for me to die than to be the murderer of my race?" Arjuna's reluctance to cause the death of his relations, even for the sake of recovering a dominion to which he had a right, shows that, though a valiant hero, he had a feeling heart. The English author of the Review of the Gítá eulogizes Arjuna's sentiments as forestalling "the future spiritual revelations of the world," by which he evidently means the Christian religion, and is so sure that those sentiments are to be regarded as a revelation that he adds, "It is high time there were some plain speaking on this matter of *exclusive* revelation, which although it may subserve the purposes of priestcraft, is no longer tenable with real

scholars and unfettered thinkers." This "real scholar and unfettered thinker" has put his foot into a trap, as people frequently do who attack Christianty. Krishna being represented as the divine teacher, and Arjuna as the human scholar, it is evident that whatever claim to inspiration is set up in behalf of the Gítá, that claim must be judged not by Arjuna's lamentations, but by Krishna's reply. Now Krishna expressly repudiates the generous and compassionate sentiments expressed by Arjuna! The writer of the Review, therefore, if he would show himself an "unfettered thinker," will have to unsay what he has said.

The substance of Krishna's reply is as follows.—"You need not feel any reluctance to kill your relations, for they cannot really die. The soul can neither kill nor be killed. It knows neither pain nor death. Every thing that is born dies, and every thing that dies is born again. The wise therefore do not grieve about either the dead or the living, nor do they allow themselves to be disturbed by any thing that comes to pass." The question to be decided with respect to these sentiments of Krishna is, are they to be regarded as a divine revelation? Is this teaching in accordance with our moral intuitions, and fitted to promote the good of mankind? It appears to me that to state it, without poetical circumlocution or embellishment, is to refute it.

I may place the tendency of the doctrine however in a clear light by supposing it acted upon in the concerns of daily life.

A man accused of murder neither denies his guilt, nor pleads that he committed the act in self-defence, but addresses the Court in the language of Krishna. "It is needless," he says, "to trouble yourselves about the inquiry any further, for it is impossible that any murder can have taken place. The soul can neither kill, nor be killed. It is eternal and indestructible. When driven from one body it passes into another. Death is

inevitable, and another birth is equally inevitable. It is not the part therefore of wise men, like the judges of this Court, to trouble themselves about such things." Would the judges regard this defence as conclusive? Certainly not. Nor would it be regarded as a conclusive defence by the friends of the murdered person, or by the world at large. The criminal might borrow from the Gítá as many sounding nothings as he liked, but the moral sense of the community would continue to regard his murder as a crime.

If the argument which Krishna uses respecting the slaughter of relations is good for any thing, it will hold good also when used respecting offences in general. Suppose then that a man accused of adultery should defend himself by saying, "the soul can neither pollute by adultery, nor be polluted by it. It is not the part of a wise man to feel any remorse about mere bodily phenomena;"—would the injured husband appreciate this line of defence, or regard this philosophy as a consolation?

Suppose again that a thief were to defend himself after the manner of the Gítá :—" The soul can neither steal nor be stolen from. Its walls cannot be dug through with a crow-bar. It cannot be tied up in a bundle and sold in the Thieving Bazaar. Every thing that is material is moveable. Why trouble ye yourselves abont the transfer of moveables from one place to another?"—would the owner of the stolen property regard this philosophy as a compensation for the loss he had sustained? or would the Court hesitate to sentence the thief to the roads?

When we thus proceed to test the truth of Krishna's teaching by applying it to the affairs of ordinary life, the rope breaks at the first pull. Here it must be remembered that Krishna does not base his exhortations to Arjuna on the justice of the war in which he was engaged. That ground might have been taken with propriety, and Arjuna was evidently persuaded of the

justice of the Pándava cause. But Krishna's arguments are not based on the "limited ideas" of justice and necessity, but upon transcendental doctrines respecting the immortality and impassibility of the soul, which, if they proved his point, would equally prove the most unjust war that ever was waged to be innocent.

Krishna's English advocate paraphrases his words thus,—"Resolve to fight, O Arjuna, for the bodies of men are but apparitions unworthy the thought of a warrior and philosopher *who has right on his side.* The vitally important words which I have put in italics—"*who has right on his side*"—have no existence in the exhortation of Krishna, but proceed from the promptings of that Christianity which the writer undervalued, but could not forget.

Arjuna is encouraged by Krishna on another ground also. "Cast but your eyes on the duties of your caste, and it ill becomes you to tremble. A soldier of the Kshatriya caste has no duty superior to fighting." If fighting and slaying are regarded as lawful, simply because they are caste employments, the immutability of moral obligations is ignored. What shall we say then of the Kallars, the thief caste of the South, the ancient (but now generally abandoned) employment of whose caste was to steal, and whose caste-name means simply "thieves?" Krishna's teaching on this head elevates the conventional duties of the institutions of a dark age above the essential distinctions between right and wrong.

We may freely assert therefore, with regard to this part of the subject, the Introductory Chapter of the Gítá, that Arjuna's *human*—it may well be styled *humane*—compassion and generosity is far preferable to the stony-hearted philosophy which Krishna professes to be divine. The style of the composition is flowing and elegant, but the philosophy taught is

unsound and the doctrine immoral. It is poison administered in honey.

The bulk of the Gítá consists of lectures supposed to have been delivered to Arjuna by Krishna before the commencement of the battle, on Soul; on the Universe; on himself, Krishna, considered as identical with the Supreme Soul, and as containing the Universe within himself; on Works and Faith; and on the means of obtaining final Emancipation. It would occupy too much space to enter into a full and searching examination of each and all of the doctrines taught in the Gítá with respect to these subjects; nor would it be necessary to do so, for the *substance* of its doctrine, when freed from repetitions, illustrations, and poetical embellishments, may be compressed into a very few words. The rhetorical beauty of the Gítá is an accident; the system of philosophy which it teaches constitutes its essence. The question before us is not,—does the Gítá abound in subtle distinctions and ingenious paradoxes? Nor is it the question,—do we discover in it here and there noble sentiments beautifully expressed? The question we have to decide is this,—is the claim set up in behalf of the Gítá, that it is inspired by the Moral Governor of the Universe, and that it is possessed in consequence of divine authority, warranted by the essential characteristics of its teaching? Setting poetical embellishment aside, the system of the Gítá may be expressed in a few general principles; and of the soundness or unsoundness of those general principles, when set nakedly before him, the discerning reader can easily judge for himself.

(1.) The doctrine of the Gítá concerning God may be regarded as its chief characteristic.

It occupies the greater portion of the poem, and it is in virtue of this that the English author entitles his production, not a Review of the Gítá, but a Review of the Theosophy of the Hindus. What then is the doctrine of the Gítá concerning God? Is it a refutation,

or is it a confirmation, of the saying of the Christian Scriptures, "the world by wisdom knew not God?" (1 Corinthians i. 21.)

According to the Gítá, God is the Soul of the world; its material cause, as well as its efficient cause. The world is his body, framed by himself out of himself. A consequence of this doctrine, a consequence which is distinctly taught again and again, is that God is all things, as containing all things. Every thing that exists is a portion of God, and every action that is performed is an action of God. The doctrine knows no limitations, and is incapable of being exaggerated. The basest animals that creep on the face of the earth have not merely been created by God for some good purpose, but are divine, inasmuch as they are portions of God's material form; and the most wicked actions which men, vainly fancying themselves free agents, are ever tempted to perform, are not only permitted by God, but are actually perpetrated by him, inasmuch as they are performed by his power and will, working out their ends through the human constitution, which is a part of himself.

This doctrine differs it is true from the Adwaita doctrine, to which alone the name of Vedantism is popularly given, that the Supreme Spirit alone really exists and that the word is unreal; but it may be regarded as questionable whether the unreality of phenomena be not preferable to the doctrine that their reality consists in their inclusion in God as parts of his totality.

Irrespective of the pantheistic audacity of this philosophy, is it reasonable to suppose it a revelation from God to man? What use would it be to mankind to have a revelation made to them consisting in metaphysical speculations respecting the nature of God's existence and insoluble questions respecting his relation to the universe? In nature God reveals himself not in theories, but in entities and operations. He affords no explanation respecting his mode of action, but

leaves it to men to search it out. In this respect the Bible accords with nature, inasmuch as God reveals himself therein not in theories respecting Being and Duty, but in the intelligible language of commands, threatenings and promises, and especially in the impressive language of facts. What the human mind requires to be supplied with from without is facts, that is, objective truth. It can manufacture for itself, and does not require to have revealed to it, such fine spun, misty speculations as those of the Gítá.

(2.) Next to its doctrine concerning God, the most distinguishing principle taught in the Gítá is the supreme importance of quietism. This quietism, which is substantially the Yóga philosophy in a more refined and less irrational shape, is treated of at great length, and illustrated again and again in a great variety of ways.

The quietism of the Gítá consists not merely in the abandonment of the hope of reward as the motive from which works are performed, about which the doctrine taught by the Gítá is one of which Christians approve, nor does it correspond with that freedom from care respecting "what we shall eat, and what we shall drink, and wherewithal we shall be clothed" which is enjoined on his disciples by Christ in the "Sermon on the Mount." The quietism of the Gítá is not unknown in Europe, for it is nearly identical with a system of philosophy which was once popular amongst the Greeks and Romans; but India, the hottest land in which people have philosophized, is the native home of the philosophy of quietism, and in the Indian philosophical systems it still survives in its first bloom.

To the wise man, according to the Gítá, pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat, are the same. He is of the same mind to the good and the bad. He is free from desire and aversion, hope and fear, unconcerned about the issue of his actions. Knowing that principles act according to their nature,

he gives himself no trouble. Knowing that all things are contained in God and are God, and that he himself is a portion of God, he fixes his mind upon God, and whether he acts or refrains from acting, abandons intention and desire.

The soundness or unsoundness of this philosophy and the probability or otherwise of its divine origin and authority, may be estimated, like the characteristics of a tree, by its fruits. What are the visible, tangible fruits of this philosophy? What has it done for India, the land of its birth?

Has it promoted popular education, civilization and good government? Has it educated the people in generous emotions? Has it abolished caste, or even mitigated its evils? Has it promoted female education? Has it obtained for widows the liberty of remarriage? Has it driven away dancing girls from the temples? Has it abolished polygamy? Has it repressed vice and encouraged virtue? Was it this philosophy which abolished female infanticide, the Meriah sacrifice, and the burning of widows? Is it this which is covering the country with a net-work of railways and telegraphs? Is it this which has kindled amongst the native inhabitants of India the spirit of improvement and enterprise which is now apparent? Need I ask the question? All this time the philosophy of quietism has been sound asleep, or with "its eyes fixed on the point of its nose," according to the directions of the Gítá, it has been thinking itself out of its wits. This philosophy has substantially been the creed of the majority of the people for upwards of two thousand years; and if it had emanated from God, the proofs of its divine origin ought long ere this to have been apparent; but it has all this time been too much absorbed in "contemplating self by means of self" to have had any time or thought left for endeavouring to improve the world. What could be expected of the philosophy of

apathy, but that it should leave things to take their course? There is much real work now being done in India in the way of teaching truth, putting down evil, and promoting the public welfare; but that work is being done, not by Vedantists or quietists of any school, but by Christians from Europe, whose highest philosophy is to do good, and by those natives of India who have been stimulated by the teaching and example of Europeans to choose a similar philosophy.

The remarks of Lord Macaulay in his Essay on Lord Bacon on the Stoical philosophy of the ancients, as contrasted with the modern Baconian philosophy, which is developed from and leavened by the practical teaching of the Christian Scriptures, will illustrate the unprofitableness of the Vedantic philosophy better than can be done by any words of mine. I commend the study of that brilliant Essay to the youthful Hindú. If Sanskrit words be substituted for the Greek technical terms quoted by Macaulay, every word that he says respecting the philosophy of Zeno may be said with equal truth of the philosophy of the Gítá.

Before leaving the Gítá I feel under the necessity of pointing out what appears to me to be the most fatal defect under which it labours, in common with the other philosophical Sastras of the Hindús. It claims to have been inspired by the Moral Governor of the Universe, and yet it ignores some of the most important principles which are implied in every theory of Moral Government. It no where exhibits any sense of the evil of sin considered as a violation of law, as defiling the conscience, and as counteracting the ends for which man was created. It makes no provision for the re-establishment of the authority of the Divine Lawgiver by the expiation of sin in such a manner as to render forgiveness compatible with justice. It teaches nothing and knows nothing respecting the forgiveness of sin. It makes no provision for the healing of the wounds of the sin-sick soul by

the communication of sanctifying grace and instruction in sanctifying truth. The salvation it teaches is not a salvation from sin by means of a new birth to righteousness, commencing in the present life and perfected hereafter, but merely a salvation from the necessity of being born again in repeated births, by means of the final emancipation of Spirit from matter. The moral system of the Gítá fails therefore in the most essential points—the vindication of the justice of the Moral Governor of the Universe and the restoration of harmony between man's moral nature and the constitution of things under which he is placed.

In every particular which I have now mentioned Christianity succeeds where the Gítá fails, and it succeeds not by its speculations, but by its facts. Its mission in the world is to reconcile justice to mercy, and man to God, and it effects the objects of its mission in every soul in which the voluntary self-sacrificing *tapas*—the suffering and dying love, of God manifest in the flesh, is realized by faith, and in which the attraction of that sacrifice produces the resolution to offer soul and body in return as a living sacrifice of grateful obedience.

This is a doctrine which Hindús might be expected to be eager to accept, for it contains the complement and full development of some parts of their own system which they have failed to comprehend. Here is the hidden mystery of their incarnations, penances, and sacrifices. Here their doctrine of *bhakti*, or exclusive faith, obtains for the first time a worthy object. They have long, as it were, been "feeling after" the truth. Here the truth visits them unsought, and is offered to them in all its completeness by Him who is "the way, the truth and the life."

"As I passed by and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship him declare I unto you." Acts of the Apostles, xvii. 23.

"Immortal *East!* dear land of glorious lays,"
"Lo! here the "unknown God" of thy unconscious praise.
"O Lord, our Lord, and spoiler of our foes,"
"There is no light but thine; with thee all beauty glows."

There are many other matters contained in the Honorable Sadagopah Charloo's Introduction on which I should have wished to remark, but I have been deterred by the fear of making this paper so lengthy as to be unreadable. I have selected for discussion only the most salient points, and if I have contributed to a more thorough investigation and a fuller knowledge of the matters discussed, and placed the thoughtful Hindú in a better position for judging for himself, between the systems in which he has been brought up and the system which claims his allegiance in the name of God, and in the name of truth and goodness and progress, I shall have accomplished the object I have had in view.

TINNEVELLY,
September 30*th*, 1863.

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